

FERRY HOUSE

VEVAY, INDIANA

Switzerland Co.

HABS NO.24-16

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IND,
78-VEVA,
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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

District No. 24

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
HERBERT W. FOLTZ, DISTRICT OFFICER
1034 Architects Building, Indianapolis

THE FERRY HOUSE

VEVAY - - - INDIANA

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The field stone Ferry House on the north bank of the Ohio River at Vevay was in the process of building when the first steamboat, the "New Orleans" passed down the river in the Fall of 1811. The Swiss gathering on the levee stood on the foundations of the house to get a better view of this new sensation which opened a new era of progress to the West. It was built by John Francis Dufour who laid out the town of Vevay in 1813.

The house was designed for an Inn to accommodate the traveling public on the river. The Dufours, having been slave owners in the south, built the kitchen across a corner alley from the main house. Mrs. Polly Critchfield Dufour was a niece of Mrs. Jane Randolph Jefferson who gave her a pink tea set for a wedding present. John James Dufour visited the Jeffersons at Monticello, and on his several trips to Europe and Monticello gave cuttings from the vineyards there which were transplanted in Vevay. John Critchfield, a Revolutionary soldier and relative of the Dufours, spent his last days with them. He died in 1841 and is buried in Vevay. The Dufours started their vineyards near Lexington, Kentucky, and there made the acquaintance of Henry Clay, who visited with John Francis Dufour and took a case of Vevay wine home with him.

A French emigrant lodger in the early days, despondent because he could not finance his families' emigration, hanged himself in the attic chamber. John Francis Dufour moved up town, and his son Oliver brought his bride Amanda Ruter Dufour to the Ferry House in 1842.

Mrs. Dufour was a poet of renown. Her "Ode to Oregon" was extensively copied when that state was admitted to the Union. Robert Dale Owen visited the Oliver Dufours and describes the Ferry House and the appearance of the apparition there, in his "Footsteps on the Boundary of Another World" published in 1858.

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In 1848 Timothy Graham bought the house and ferry. The Grahams are a hardy race and have rescued many persons from drowning in the river. During their three generations of ferrying, the house has never been owned by others than the Dufours and Grahams. It is now owned by the heirs of Mrs. Martha Graham, her daughter Eva and granddaughter Ruth Furnish, who occupy the residence.

Fifty-two flood stage of the Ohio brings the water on the first floor. The floods of 1883-84 brought the water to the top of the mantels on the second floor. In the endeavor to preserve the walls, the stone work has been cemented.

- Written by Mrs. A. V. Danner of Vevay, Ind.
for Wilson B. Parker of Indianapolis.

References:

Switzerland Monitor, (Vevay Newspaper) of 1833
Vine Dresser's Guide
Ferret Dufour
Letters of Mrs. Amanda Ruter Dufour.

March, 1934

(Signed) Wilson B. Parker
Squad Leader

Approved Herbert H. Foltz
DISTRICT OFFICER

Revised 1936 by H.C.F.